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Report of Acting Commonwealth Statistician on -

UNEMPLOYMENT - 4th QUARTER, 1931.

The returns of the Trade Unions show for the fourth quarter, i.e. for the middle of November, a percentage of 28.0 compared with 28.3 for the previous quarter. This is the first time for three years that a quarterly return has shown a decrease on the previous quarter. The third quarter showed a very small increase on the previous quarter, and there were strong indications that unemployment had reached its peak. The figures for the fourth quarter confirm this conclusion. The percentage of trade union unemployment in normal times has shown no tendency to be less in the 4th quarter than in the third, and the decrease now shown, though small, may be taken as significant.

The increase is chiefly due to improved conditions in Victoria where unemployment fell from 26.8% to 25.6%. New South Wales shows a small decrease and the other States a small increase, except Tasmania where the increase is appreciable.

In most of the industrial groups, unemployment shows little change in the fourth quarter; but in building it is distinctly worse, increasing from 33.5 to 36.0 per cent. In the clothing group, on the other hand, there is a marked improvement from 27.4 to 23.7 per cent, due to increased employment in textile manufacture, and a similar movement in miscellaneous manufacturing. It was only to be expected that unemployment in building trades would increase for a time after other employment has become steady or improved.

Some additional information of the movement of employment generally (including Trade Union unemployment) is afforded by the reports of the State Unemployment Exchanges.

In New South Wales, the estimate of unemployed fell from 125,000 in August to 115,000 in September, and 110,000 in October and November. The improvement was chiefly in rural occupations (which would not much affect the Trade Union returns), but partly in manufacturing.

In Victoria, registrations of unemployment, fell gradually from about 41,000 at the end of September to 39,000 at the beginning of December, - a decrease of about 6 per cent.

Queensland has a more effective registration of unemployed than any other State, and the figures are of much greater significance. But the Queensland conditions are peculiar and their figures cannot be taken as a typical sample of Australia. Registrations fell from about 29,000 at the beginning of the year to 20,700 in August, but had increased to 23,100 in October. The fall and rise are both partly seasonal and offer little light on the general trend. Unemployment is still much lighter in Queensland than in any other State, but the increase over last year is worse than for any other State, whether measured by Trade Union returns or State registrations.

South Australia reported a marked improvement in employment in November. This, however, was entirely due to loan money being available for public works, but for private employment the situation remains unchanged.

No recent information is available from Western Australia and Tasmania.

The information on the whole confirms the conclusion that unemployment has passed the peak and is mending slowly. The prospects of continued though slow improvement are good, if the present danger of a fresh European collapse can be averted. Unless effective support is given to the German economic structure, nothing can prevent a fresh slump in export prices and a new intensification of depression, and unemployment in Australia.

The usual tables for Trade Union Unemployment are appended:-

UNEMPLOYMENT - AUSTRALIA - Number and Membership of Trade Unions
Reporting, and Number and Percentage Unemployed - 1st
Quarter, 1929; 2nd to 4th Quarters, 1931.

State.	1st Quarter, 1929.	2nd Quarter, 1931.	3rd Quarter, 1931.	4th Quarter, 1931.
Number of Unions ..	375	397	396	396
Membership ..	420,756	429,687	426,603	423,493
Unemployed - Number ..	39,159	118,424	120,694	118,732
Percentage	9.3	27.6	28.3	28.0

Percentage of Members of Trade Unions returned as Unemployed for
the 1st Quarter, 1929; 2nd to 4th Quarters,
1931.

State.	1st Quarter, 1929.	2nd Quarter, 1931.	3rd Quarter, 1931.	4th Quarter, 1931.
	%	%	%	%
New South Wales ..	9.7	30.7	31.6	31.5
Victoria ..	8.6	26.5	26.8	25.6
Queensland ..	7.1	16.1	16.9	17.5
South Australia ..	13.2	32.4	33.3	33.7
Western Australia ..	8.5	27.1	27.9	28.1
Tasmania ..	8.7	27.3	27.3	28.4
<u>AUSTRALIA</u> ..	9.3	27.6	28.3	28.0

Unemployment Percentages in Industrial Groups - Australia -
1st Quarter, 1929; 2nd to 4th Quarters, 1931.

Industrial Group.	1st Quarter, 1929.	2nd Quarter, 1931.	3rd Quarter, 1931.	4th Quarter, 1931.
<u>Manufacturing -</u>				
I. Wood, Furniture, etc.	6.5	33.3	34.0	34.8
II. Engineering, Metal Works, etc.	11.2	30.2	31.2	31.2
III. Food, Drink, Tobacco, &c.	5.4	20.7	20.5	20.8
IV. Clothing, Hats, - Booths, etc.	9.8	26.7	27.4	23.7
V. Books, Printing, &c.	2.6	14.4	15.0	15.0
VI. Other Manufacturing	13.8	44.3	45.0	42.5
VII. Building ..	10.6	32.6	33.5	36.0
VIII. Mining, Quarrying, etc.	13.2	32.7	33.7	33.5
X. Land Transport, other than Railway and Tram- way Services ..	7.6	24.0	25.5	25.5
IX, XI, XII, XIII, and XIV, Other and Miscellaneous	7.3	19.9	20.5	20.2
<u>TOTAL</u> ..	9.3	27.6	28.3	28.0

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